of the weaker sections of the society, etc. and (iii) direct attack on poverty through employment and income generating programmes and assets-building for the poor. In addition to the on-going programmes of the State Government and Central Schemes for poverty alleviation and employment generation, Special Central Assistance of Rs. 100 crore has been allocated under the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana for the Special Plan for the the KBK districts of Orissa.

Trade curbs on SAARC members

*433. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has been urged to lift trade curbs on SAARC Members;

(b) if so, whether the Executive Director of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) has pointed out that India would also benefit from the exercise, since the economic expansion would increase the demand for the Indian goods as well;

(c) whether any steps have been taken by Government in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) India had unilaterally lifted all quantitative restrictions preferentially for SAARC countries from August 1st, 1998, placing over 2000 product lines from the restricted list on to the OGL (Open General License). India also offered to conclude bilateral Free Trade Agreements with any SAARC country that wants to move faster on this front. Sri Lanka took up this offer and signal the Free Trade Agreement in March, 2000.

The South Asian Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is not part of the SAARC process and its focus is on environmental issues. We are not aware of any comments by SACEPS on SAARC Trade.

India is always ready to move ahead on Trade and economic co-operation within SAARC and continuous to play to positive role to bring this about.

India have been pushing for the conclusion and full operationalisation of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) process started in 1993. India is also pushing for early finalization of the Draft Framework Treaty on establishing a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

Appointment of ESI Doctors

*434. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recruitment rules in respect of appointment of medical officers of ESI hospitals are proposed to be radically modified;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal and whether the proposal runs counter to the established norms of recruitment to Government/ autonomous agencies;

(c) whether prior approval of Government was obtained for the proposed modification; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA): (a) There is no proposal for amendment of Recruitment Regulations of the Medical Officers, at present.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Action against officers

†*435. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in recent years a list of 2427 officials was prepared by the Central Vigilance Commission who were accused of corruption charges; and

(b) the number of persons out of them against whom cases have been initiated so far in the court of law?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.